

Local Bridge Improvement Assistance (Local Bridge Program)

Statute: Local Bridge Program: [§84.18](#)

Admin. Rule: [Trans 213](#)

Program objective:

The Local Bridge Program was established to rehabilitate and replace, on a cost-shared basis, the most seriously deteriorating existing local bridges on Wisconsin's local highway and road systems. Local units of government are responsible under [Administrative Rule Chapter Trans 213](#) for the maintenance and inspection of local bridges.

Program eligibility:

Projects must meet federal and state requirements. A project must be located on a locally owned public roadway (not on a connecting highway) and the structure must have a span of greater than 20 feet in length to be eligible for funding. In addition, the bridge must not have been constructed or reconstructed in the last 10 years regardless of the funding source. This requirement excludes routine maintenance work. Counties, cities, villages and towns are eligible for rehabilitation funding on bridges with a sufficiency rating (SR) of 80 or less, and replacement funding on bridges with a SR less than 50. Each county is responsible to review and prioritize eligible bridge projects within that county. Bridge deficiency is measured using the federal bridge rating methodology, which establishes the relative adequacy of a bridge in terms of structural and safety aspects, serviceability and functional obsolescence, and suitability for public use.

Locals submit bridge inspection information to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Structures Bureau, which calculates the SR. Seriously deteriorating local bridges with a SR less than 50 are included on an eligibility list and eligible for replacement. Seriously deteriorating local bridges with a SR of 80 or less are also included on an eligibility list and are eligible for rehabilitation. Local units are then notified which bridges are on the list. The decision on whether or not to apply for local bridge funds is the responsibility of the local unit of government. Both federal and state funds for local bridges are allocated by formula to each county based on its statewide proportional share of bridge replacement costs. Counties then prioritize the projects that were applied for.

If the SR is above 50, a bridge replacement project may be approved if the Rehabilitation Report demonstrates that a bridge replacement is more cost effective than a rehabilitation project.

In emergency situations where the structural integrity of a bridge is compromised, resulting in the closure of a bridge to motor vehicle traffic, the Department may consider accepting an "off-cycle" application to replace the damaged bridge. Local Bridge funds must be available to consider an "off-cycle" request.

To maximize the number of bridges improved through the Local Bridge Program, funding eligibility is limited to the minimum project scope necessary for a safe and effective facility. The starting point for determination of the eligible scope is based on the existing facility. The scope of the project may

increase based on safety, conformance with applicable minimum federal and state engineering standards, projected traffic needs, or other factors as approved by WisDOT.

For bridges that are on roadways on the federal-aid highway system, federal or state funds cover 80 percent of specific individual participating project costs and local funds provide the remaining 20 percent plus any federal or state non-participating items. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law stipulates for bridges that are on roadways off the federal-aid highway system, federal funds cover 100 percent of the eligible participating project costs. These off-system bridges are on roadways that are functionally classified as a local road or minor collector. The state's ability to continue funding off-system bridge at 100% is dependent on future federal transportation authorization bills.

Program definition:

WisDOT has two local bridge programs: a statewide local bridge entitlement program and a high-cost local bridge program defined in [§84.11](#) and [Trans 215](#). WisDOT recommends that potential project sponsors seek funding through the high cost local bridge program if their project is eligible because available funding limits WisDOT's ability to fund very high cost projects through the Local Bridge Improvement Assistance Program.

Program description:

Each county is responsible to review and prioritize bridge applications within that county, which are subject to meeting eligibility requirements for the program. Bridge inspections are rated based on the federal bridge sufficiency rating methodology (Code of Federal Regulations, [Title 23 Part 650.409](#)). This method produces SRs on a scale of 0-100. By definition, a local bridge is considered to be seriously deteriorating if it is a deficient bridge ([Trans 213.02\(8\)](#)). A deficient bridge is defined as either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete ([Trans 213.02\(2m\)](#)).

Program history:

A federal program for local bridge replacement was initiated in 1979, which included a requirement that all non-state maintained bridges be inspected once every two years. WisDOT developed a planning inventory and needs assessment, which resulted in a program to replace or rehabilitate bridges on the local system. State funds for the local bridge entitlement program were first approved in the 1981-83 biennial budget.

Application cycle:

To continue statewide program stability efforts, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) will manage a full five-year (five state fiscal years) program of projects. This provides the department and local sponsors the ability to review and adjust the already scheduled first two state fiscal years of the programs (2025 and 2026) as needed and add another three state fiscal years of approved projects to the schedule (2027, 2028 and 2029).

Current Local Bridge Improvement Assistance Program Budget (based on 2022-2023 Budget)

<u>SFY 2022</u>	\$ 69.4M(Federal Funds)
	\$ 18.5M (State Funds)
<u>SFY 2023</u>	\$ 69.4M (Federal Funds)
	\$ 18.5M (State Funds)

The WisDOT Region contact information is found of the corresponding WisDOT web page.